

St. Casimir's School
Cambria City Neighborhood
400 Fifth Avenue
Johnstown
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5766

HABS
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Location: 400 Fifth Avenue, Cambria City, Johnstown, Cambria County, Pa.

Description: The school is a three-story brick building, with stone facing on the lower two stories. It has a roughly rectangular plan, 83' x 50'. The basement housed a gymnasium and utilities, the first floor had six classrooms and offices, and the second story had four classrooms and a music room.

The horizontality of the building is stressed by a pronounced string course dividing each story. The roof is flat with a brick parapet except where the recessed centerpiece on the principal facade rises to form a low concrete gable. The centerpiece has three entrances. There is a frieze above them inscribed "St. Casimir's School 1913 and 1925," commemorating the two-phase construction dates of the school. Above the entrances are long flat-arched windows which light the central stairwells. The facades flanking the centerpiece have ranges of five flat-arched windows on each story.

History: In January of 1903, the parochial school of St. Casimir was opened. It was conducted in the basement church, and was separated from the church by a partition. Mr. Szymanski, the organist of the parish, was the first school teacher. For almost ten years the parochial school existed under the tutorship of lay people. Finally, to improve the scholastic standard of the school, Father Dembinski set out to find a Community of Polish Sisters who would assume the supervision of the school. Through Bishop Rhode, then in the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Franciscan Sisters of Kunegunda agreed to send Sisters. They arrived at the beginning of September 1912. The school, which consisted of six grades, continued for a while in the basement of the church.

In March 1913, work began on a new six-room school. The architect was Walter Myton (1872-1929), a noted Johnstown architect. The school was completed in September and it was dedicated on September 21. In 1925, the upper story was added to the school. The new addition was opened in February 1926.

Sources:

"Cambria County Historic Site Survey, Johnstown Inventory," Cambria County Redevelopment Authority, 1981.

Golden Anniversary pamphlet, St. Casimir's Church, 1952.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP). An overview of history of the city (HABS No. PA-5669) and an overview of the neighborhoods of Cambria City and Minersville (HABS No. PA-5672) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also HABS No. PA-5743 for further information on St. Casimir's and additional HABS reports on buildings in the downtown and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Bernadette Goslin in August 1988 under the direction of Alison K. Hoagland, HABS historian, and Kim E. Wallace, the supervisory historian of the project. Goslin's and other project historians' work was published as The Character of a Steel Mill City: Four Historic Neighborhoods of Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1989), edited by Kim E. Wallace. Illustrations in the publication include large format photographs taken by HAER photographer Jet Lowe and 35 mm photographs taken by the project historians.